

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application.

Listing of Claims

Claim 1 (currently amended): A method of merging traffic, the method comprising: receiving a plurality of messages from at least two sources; wherein each message ~~contains~~ comprises a frame position field value and a payload;

positioning each of at least two of said plurality of messages at a common location within a ~~6-millisecond~~ superframe wherein the frame position field value contained within each of the at least two messages are identical; and

positioning at unique locations in the ~~6-millisecond~~ superframe, messages of said plurality that have different frame position field values;

merging the payloads of the at least two messages containing identical frame position field values to create a merged payload; and

routing the merged payload to a port.

Claim 2 (canceled).

Claim 3 (original): The method of claim 1, wherein the at least two messages are received at a switch prior to merging.

Claim 4 (original): The method of claim 1, wherein the messages are merged at a switch.

Claim 5 (currently amended): The method of claim 1, wherein prior to merging each of the at least two messages is directed to an identical destination ~~prior to merging~~ or a common plurality of destinations.

Claim 6 (original): The method of claim 1, wherein the plurality of messages are further comprised of fixed length packets.

Claim 7 (original): The method of claim 6, wherein the fixed length packets are TDM packets.

Claim 8 (original): The method of claim 4, wherein the switch performs a simple OR function when merging the messages.

Claim 9 (original): The method of claim 1, wherein the port is an output port on a switch.

Claim 10 (original): The method of claim 4, wherein the port is an output port on the switch.

Claim 11 (original): The method of claim 1, further comprising:
multicasting a message targeted to a plurality of destinations to each destination wherein the message is multicast by a switch.

Claim 12 (currently amended): The method of claim 1, further comprising:

aligning each of the at least two messages.

Claim 13 (original): The method of claim 1, wherein there are 48 ~~125-microsecond~~ frames per each ~~6-millisecond~~ superframe and each start of a ~~6-millisecond~~ superframe is coincident with a frame sync pulse.

Claim 14 (original): The method of claim 1, wherein the ~~6-millisecond~~ superframe is at the source of each of the at least two messages.

Claim 15 (currently amended): The method of claim ~~[[2]]~~ 1, wherein the messages that are not merged are positioned at locations within the ~~6-millisecond~~ superframe independent of the frame position field values within each message that is not merged.

Claims 16-21 (canceled).

Claim 22 (new): A system for merging traffic, comprising

means for receiving a plurality of messages from at least two sources;

wherein each message comprises a frame position field value and a payload;

means for positioning each of at least two of said plurality of messages at a common location within a superframe wherein the frame position field value contained within each of the at least two messages are identical;

means for positioning at unique locations in the superframe, messages of said plurality that have different frame position field values;

means for merging the payloads of the at least two messages containing identical frame position field values to create a merged payload; and

means for routing the merged payload to a port.

Claim 23 (new): The system of claim 22, wherein prior to merging each of the at least two messages is directed to an identical destination or to a common plurality of destinations.

Claim 24 (new): The system of claim 22, wherein the plurality of messages are further comprised of fixed length packets.

Claim 25 (new): The system of claim 22, wherein the fixed length packets are TDM packets.

Claim 26 (new): The system of claim 22, wherein the means for merging performs a simple OR function when merging the messages.

Claim 27 (new): The system of claim 22, wherein the messages that are not merged are positioned at locations within the superframe independent of the frame position field values within each message that is not merged.